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Library Services for the Poor: Theoretical Framework for Library Social Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

Organizations are being called upon to take responsibility for the ways their operations impact societies especially the marginalized sectors. Libraries are not exempt from such social responsibility. The paper proposes a theoretical framework for Library Social Responsibility. The paper briefly traces the history of library services for the poor. Then, through such literature review, it identifies the common characteristics of the inclusive services and puts these together in a conceptual framework. The approach is, thus, inductive. The paper's proposed theoretical framework for workable and potentially successful library services for the poor includes the following elements: 1) Planning process and Critical discourse; 2) Informational justice (as part of social justice), and 3) Assistive technologies and Inclusive education. It is hoped that all --librarians and library users alike-- may take inspiration from this work so that they may do all they can to provide services to the poor, keeping especially in mind the success factors of the existing libraries' work for the poor and marginalized, as set forth in this paper.

Keywords: social responsibility, inclusion, libraries, library social responsibility

INTRODUCTION

Institutions are being called upon to be accountable for the ways in which their operations have been affecting societies and the environment. Gone are the days that enterprises experience financial prosperity in isolation from those actors impacted by their actions. An organization must now focus its efforts on both minding its financial sustainability and carrying out its social responsibilities. The matter of the social responsibility of organizations has grown significantly and today contains a wide variety of theories, terminologies and approaches to emphasize the obligation of organizations to contribute to the well-being of communities and the society (D'Amato et al., 2009; Garriga and Melé, 2004; Racelis, 2017). Social responsibility and inclusivity are topics which are becoming critical in public discourse and in the economic realm, and libraries are no exception. Across research libraries around the globe, important changes are occurring as the value of inclusivity is gaining rapid momentum (Pereyaslavska and Abba, 2015).

The library—and in a special way, the public library—has huge potential to assist the poor and disenfranchised. It can provide free computer use, free meeting rooms, literacy help, help with language skills and job-searching, over and above more familiar services. Libraries, not least, are a safe space in which to shelter - neutral turf. However, librarians and their employers can show ambivalence about services to the poor. We are all aware of barriers to membership - do we require a permanent address? Are our premises welcoming? Are our staff welcoming and helpful to one and all, not just a narrow range of the public? Do we levy overdue charges? (Holt and Holt, 2010). Are libraries carrying out their educational and socializing functions for the poor by providing "substantial inputs"? Inputs can be in terms of added staff, materials, facilities, services, relationships, and skills. A growing number of libraries are demonstrating ways of extending service to their total clientele. This paper reviews

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the evidence, and proposes a Theoretical Framework for Library Social Responsibility based on selected success cases and their common elements of success. The paper likewise draws implications and recommendations for the continued challenges in this regard.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE POOR

In 1964, the Johnson presidency promulgated the Library Services and Construction Act (also known as LSCA) which provided federal aid to improve educational quality and opportunities in schools, in order to help the President's program to help poor and working class Americans. From Title I (a matching program, based on a state plan, to establish and improve public library services) have come such well-known innovative programs as Queens Borough's Operation Head Start Program for preschool children and their mothers, Cleveland Public Library's Reading Centers Project for Adults, and the expanded community coordinator program of the Brooklyn Public Library. Four community coordinators work in seriously underprivileged neighborhoods in Brooklyn, to speak to people directly, individually, and in groups, on the uses to which they can put the library. The coordinators set up a library shop wherever the customers are, by means of a mobile book van, "Sidewalk Service," equipped with loudspeaker, films, and projector. In its 3B project, Brooklyn places a ready reference collection in beauty shops, bars, and barbershops to stimulate an interest in books and in the use of the nearest branch library (Winnick and Lyman, 1967).

In the 1960s and 1970s, debates were rife about the neutrality of the library profession vis-à-vis librarians' obligations to be accountable for the improvement of societal conditions through library resources. In 1967, two events were critical for the emphasis on the social responsibility argument: One was when a pro-war speech was protested against by a group of librarian peace activists at an ALA annual conference, the other being the presentation by Taylor at a regional conference of the argument in favor of the need for socially responsible librarianship. Thus arose the renewal of librarians' commitment, from criticism to coordinated response. Thereafter, the organization of the ALA Round Table on Social Responsibilities of Libraries as well as the Congress for Change subsequently advocated a social justice-based agenda, giving rise therefore to the consideration of the concept of social justice within the Library and Information Services (LIS) professions (Burgess, 2013; Mathiesen, 2015).

In the late 1980s, members of the Minnesota Social Responsibilities Round Table crafted ALA's Policy 61, "Library Services for the Poor": this was later submitted to the national Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) membership in January 1990, after which ALA adopted it in June 1990. The policy's fifteen objectives propose, among others, the promotion of the eradication of any barriers to library and information services, as well as the production, publication, purchase, and ready accessibility of materials (both print and nonprint) to address poverty issues and to deal with poor people with respect. They likewise encourage the establishment of tighter relationships with community groups that address such issues as homelessness and hunger. Overall, the policy was adopted to make sure low-income individuals or communities get access to and manage to utilize libraries, as well as to encourage a deeper understanding of the dimensions and causes of poverty and the ways it can be eradicated or alleviated (American Library Association, 2012; Gehner, 2005).

Nevertheless, a number of challenges remain for the future and creative solutions will definitely be at a premium. It has been said that there is a need to definitively recognize popular materials and resources that study economic injustice and its impact on humankind, as well as the need for jointly organizing a study of poverty as a shared concern. Included among these are the economic crises that have caused legislators to ask whether libraries will remain a priority as well as the aging of the population and their changing needs, among others. A need for united deliberation and action on this front continues to be recognized (Farrell, 2012; Gehner, 2005).

INCLUSIVITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Many proponents believe that the whole library organization has to be committed to offering excellent service to the poor. They outline what would constitute successful service delivery, and they point to the importance of evaluating particular programmes, since funding can be safeguarded if a programme can be shown to be essential. They demonstrate that there are opportunities to develop partnerships with other community bodies and government agencies, and some of the programmes they mention show great creativity (Holt and Holt, 2010). The idea of social responsibility basically encompasses ethical dimensions. Over the past ten to fifteen years, many modern organizations have introduced ethics and compliance programs as well as activities taking up corporate values, considering not only stockholders but all of the enterprise's stakeholders as well. In many cases, reporting procedures and accountability programs for corporate and social values have also been introduced. Organizational managers see these measures as a way of making sure not only that the responsibility and integrity of their

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organizations are taken into account, but also that these become markers of competitiveness, efficient management, and legitimacy in complex democratic societies. For libraries, social responsibility concerns meeting human needs and how this is to be done; it involves the social dimensions of library and information services as well as how this influences improving the quality of life. Many librarians and library staff now recognize that they are responsible to any group or individual who are impacted by or who impact their institution ("stakeholder", in the management responsibility literature) (DuMont, 1991; Rendtorff, 2009).

One can say that there are various "layers" of corporate responsibility: first, to make a profit; second, to fulfill legal responsibilities; third, fulfilment of ethical responsibilities; and fourth, "discretionary" responsibilities (Sauser, 2005). Similarly, one can look at library social responsibility on a 4-stage continuum: Stage One is responsibility for the library collection; the next stage involves responsibility for employees; following this, the stage afterward refers to responsibility to library users; and finally, the last step extends responsibility yonder, by asserting that information professionals be responsible to users and non-users alike, that is, to society in general (DuMont, 1991). While most Social Responsibility initiatives form part chiefly of the "discretionary" responsibility, more and more organizations are embracing socially responsible activities and investments because of profitability, and also because more leaders are now of the belief that it is a matter of competitive advantage to be a good corporate citizen. The leadership of many of the institutions spearheading the contemporary Social Responsibility movement may be genuinely motivated by a commitment to social or environmental goals. This belief has attracted those who hope to incentivize institutions to become more responsible as well as to encourage those who want to lead, manage, and invest in enterprises that are virtuous. The fact is that funders' demands are now putting pressure on organizations to produce strong financial sustainability as well as meet social objectives (Vogel, 2005).

When one situates social responsibility within a political theory based on elements of political philosophy and political economics, (i.e., using the vocabulary of political philosophy such as democracy, justice, fairness, etc.), a theorization of justice can clarify many of the ethical issues. Concretely, from an institutional theory perspective, taking part in an institution presupposes belonging to a community, people, or nation. In this space of life together, common action, decision-making, justice, and equality are important concerns. There is a strong need for LIS to develop its own understanding of *social justice* (Rendtorff, 2009; Mathiesen, 2015).

Justice, as a *social virtue*—compassion, integrity, healing, flourishing, and resilience being other examples—, is an important component of moral judgments and plays a critical role in inclusive or global education. With the revival of virtue ethics in the 20th and 21st centuries, *justice* has come to be a variable that is demanded in a great number of areas of public policy. Justice allows us to recognize and respect the rights of others: thus, it provides legitimacy and wide support of inclusive programs in civil society. Included in such programs are provisions for access to health care, to education, and to information, among others (Stumpf et al., 2016; Manz et al., 2015).

Independent of the debate over whether companies have *social justice* obligations, it can be universally claimed that institutions should bring with them public goods and benefits, and that those goods should include the protection of and respect for human rights (Campbell and Miller, 2005). What has the librarian got to do with the cause of human rights? Section V of the Library Bill of Rights responds to this thus: "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." Globally, it is well known that the right to information is an essential human right which allows the individual to develop himself/herself, fully exercising his/her rights and duties and, thus, participating actively within a democratic society (Todaro, 2005; Phenix and McCook, 2005). Furthermore, the 2010 ALA Strategic Plan encompassed social responsibility and the public good as part of the commitments of librarians. To what extent are librarians and the library institution fulfilling this commitment? This question provides an understanding of how LIS professionals and scholars can use the idea of *social justice* in their work (Mathiesen, 2015).

CATEGORIES OF POOR

The Homeless: Libraries have historically been a haven for homeless people: the homeless typically, in certain jurisdictions, use libraries as a safe place to avoid the elements or to sleep. As mentioned above, the ALA adopted the SRRT in 1990 and has exerted efforts to provide services and programming to help those experiencing homelessness: it has done this, above all, through outreach and promotion. It has designed a toolkit to help library staff and librarians create helpful and valuable services for homeless people (American Library Association, 2012). Certain libraries have responded well by eliminating rules that discriminated against the homeless, for instance, by making it easier for them to access the library's computers, which are often used for both job searches and entertainment by homeless and low-income people. Some have hired social workers to work directly with homeless patrons. Overall, libraries have added services in order to aid a growing class of patrons (Social Responsibilities Round Table, 2012).

Several studies have been dedicated to the homeless as library users. A study showed that many homeless people use libraries to read for entertainment and use the internet. A work, from the Zagreb City Libraries, presents

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various models of organizing library services for the homeless. Examples are: information literacy and creative workshops for the homeless; assisted article writing; occasional sales of items made by the homeless; promotions of programmes that include the homeless; bonding activities; among many others. Its project, "A Book for a Roof", sought to empower the homeless to become actively involved in the labor market. A French study shows a large public reference library making available to its users a lot of materials and services, highly accessible without identity cards or membership, oftentimes free of charge. The Bpi welcomes visitors, including the homeless community. Librarians in public libraries continue to find themselves before substantial challenges in organizing services for the homeless (Kelleher, 2013; Bunic, 2013; Gaudet, 2013).

Persons with Disability (PWD): Disability can be defined as a lack of a perfect match between what an environment is able to offer and the needs of an individual. This is important for libraries since it changes the basic assumptions or contexts related to accessibility and disability. The IFLA Section for Library Services to People with Special Needs (LSN) has emphasized on those who are unable to access current library services, given their special physical and mental conditions as well as their social relations, many of whom are unable to have their needs for security, food, and personal hygiene met. In the US, the Americans with Disabilities Act has instructions for library services, programs and activities to be made accessible to people with disabilities. In many jurisdictions, there is lack of access to the community-based support that people with disabilities need (International Federation of Library Associations, 2017; Pereyaslavska and Abba, 2015; Stewart et al., 2005). To overcome these deficiencies, initiatives have been created, for example, Project ENABLE (Expanding Non-discriminatory Access By Librarians Everywhere) a combined basic/train-the-trainer training to create inclusive libraries that address information needs of students with disabilities. It began in New York at Syracuse University with a state-wide project for school librarian-led educator teams to provide face-to-face professional development in summer workshops (Small et al., 2014).

The 2007 volume of Developmental Disabilities Bulletin has a strong focus on assistive technologies. A study reported on a survey of current levels of training and satisfaction with training in assistive technology (AT), as well as barriers and support strategies. Two other studies demonstrated competencies developed in the AT teacher training course (Goldberg and Wilgosh, 2007). Nevertheless, in many other jurisdictions, especially in the underdeveloped regions, there is still a grave lack of or insufficiency in these assistive technologies (Sanaman and Kumar, 2014; Koulikourdi, 2008).

Incarcerated/Detained: Corrections librarians can ameliorate problems every day in many different ways. Having a library in jail means there are community members in a place where they largely don't like to have civilians. Many times, just the presence of librarians there makes a difference. Or, simply making books available gives inmates a lifeline. In our high-tech era, this is an extraordinary opportunity for public librarians to advocate the value of the printed word! Good solid customer service offers librarians an opportunity to rehumanize a chronically inhumane environment in which inmates and most facility staff interrelate according to a tension-generating paradigm of "us versus them." The wide range of possibilities for providing service in jails and prisons largely depends upon two factors. Facility administration determines quantity of service, specifically what level of service will be staffed and funded, and by whom. The presence or absence of a civilian librarian and that person's opinion of and approach to library service to inmates strongly influences quality of service. Good customer service in jail depends upon two things: civility and fairness. A disproportionate number of inmates come from impoverished backgrounds; many do not speak English. In these cultures, the public library doesn't always have much impact. Part of this may be due to the impression residents of poorer communities have of the library as government institution. Certainly behind bars, if you're not in prisoner garb, the inmates automatically lump you in with the security staff. It takes time to build trust as you walk the delicate line between advocating for inmate patrons and honoring the facility's rules. Friendly, competent professionalism is a hallmark of public library customer service; traditional library patrons expect it. For prisoners, many of whom may never have set foot in a public library, this kind of customer service is alien. And it will be treated with skepticism at first. That's where fairness comes in. In this environment, as in the public library, it pays to have well-considered policies governing materials selection, conduct in the library, means of accessing library services, and the extent to which services will be provided. These policies protect the librarian by establishing boundaries and guiding one's actions, but also by ensuring that everyone plays by the same rules. When inmates see that everybody will be treated in the same way, they will begin to trust librarians' good intentions. If they come to accept kindness and professionalism, one will have broken through a barrier of suspicion and misunderstanding that many of these people have harboured their entire lives. And maybe, when they get out, they won't be afraid to utilize the resources of their local public libraries. Correctional librarians cannot ignore their role in improving the status quo within the correctional facility community itself. If that means nothing more than providing a bright moment in an otherwise bleak day, then they will have positively impacted the status quo (Clark and MacCreaigh, 2006).

Rural and Isolated Populations – Bookmobiles: In the 1960s, intense efforts were exerted to carry out the mandate of the ***Library Services and Construction Act***, whereby technical assistance to communities in

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developing, conducting, and administering Community Action Programs and training for specialized or other personnel were provided. Ways were demonstrated whereby the large public library could decentralize its collections and program services through its community action agency neighborhood centers located in the target area (Winnick and Lyman, 1967). Another case was the multi-county bookmobile program in Texas and its earlier "travelling libraries" program. In both programs—which had the mission to reach people deprived of proper library service—, inadequate funding and the difficulties of sending books over the vast distances were just some of the problems encountered by librarians. Eventually, travelling librarians and bookmobiles brought reading pleasure to families in isolated farms and ranches: in a sense, these were the prequel to today's county libraries. Throughout the country, library advocates and librarians found bookmobiles as an affordable means of bringing library services to rural folk, thus drumming up interest in the development of local libraries. All told, supporters of child welfare and education embraced the mission and ideals of travelling libraries and became their primary advocates (Cummings, 2009).

Adult Learners: Adult learners have unique developmental and social characteristics as compared to their traditional counterparts in higher education. There is frequently a significant chasm separating the educational experiences of traditional students and non-traditional students; the former primarily focus on individual needs and social growth, while the latter concentrate more on family needs and economic growth. These developmental and social differences affect pedagogical design and delivery not only in the traditional classroom but also in the library. Library instruction models used for traditional learners are not always effective when teaching adults. A case has been documented of a University initiative whose aim was to provide direct services to populations beyond college or out of school who have lifelong information needs: typically, they would require unique instructional models, including changes to existing library instruction and services. Lifelong learners usually go information literacy skills, in order to find, analyze and use quality information in the different stages of their life. Typical users are adult learners in need of just-in-time education and not credits or a degree: eventually, they are able to utilize information to their advantage. The program uses both videos and classroom lectures to teach information literacy. Participants included adults over the age of fifty, owners of small- to medium-sized businesses, and women experiencing homelessness (Gold, 2005; Birdsong and Freitas, 2012). There is still more to be done, however, to find appropriate strategies and assessments for specific demographics.

TOWARDS A PROPOSED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Globally, the population of poor citizens, persons experiencing homelessness, persons with disability, etc. continues to grow. Libraries and librarians have the opportunity to provide for the human dignity of these persons and form relationships that will make the library an important part of their lives. As has been seen above, a better planning model and a more strategic communication and discourse, along with library organizations' commitment to eradicating barriers to inclusivity, are an essential part of building an enthusiastic working culture as well as raising awareness, thus offering support mechanisms in order to reach all members of our diverse communities, especially the marginalized and excluded. While the diversity of both patrons and library staff should be reflected in the diversity of libraries' solutions, nevertheless the following success elements are evident in more inclusive library services for the poor (these are diagrammed in the framework in **Figure 1** below, and discussed in turn in the next section).

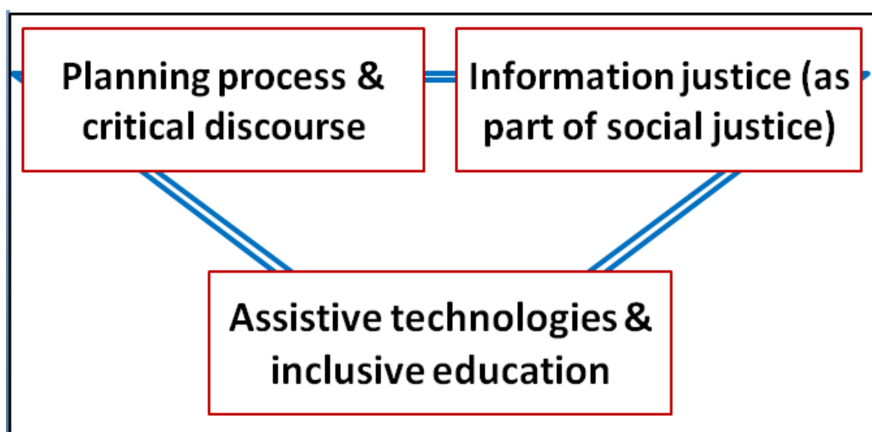

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework for Library Social Responsibility

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DISCUSSION

Planning process and Critical discourse

Social initiatives can enable people from all walks of life to unite around common objectives. Indeed, librarians across the globe have worked towards community-building and to empower the have-nots to possess materials they do not yet have. Library planning models have been used since 1987 that have been rather successful. For instance, a model that offers a list of services responses can communicate the ways in which a library meets the needs of specific communities. A way in which these services responses have been carried out and disseminated is through the creation of an authentic discourse which is critical and can be analyzed. Discourse analysis views a prevailing social order and social processes as constituted and sustained less by the will of individuals than by the pervasiveness of particular constructions or versions of reality, referred to as *discourses*. Discourse analysis has recently been promoted as a rapidly growing perspective from which to investigate how communication and other discursive methods influence processes and outcomes. Applied to libraries or librarianship, one can take the discourse, for example, on the library as a *calling* or *vocation*, and create theories, practices or research writing on that matter. In a special way, ***critical*** discourse analysis focuses on how the social space within which individuals and groups act is structured by discursive activity: this happens through the creation of objects, concepts, etc. around those discourses (Koeberlé, 2012; Locke, 2004; McCook, 2001). The library and librarianship have benefited from the various objects and images created through various multi-faceted discourses. Librarians caught between forces of demand and supply, and concerned for their continuing relevance in the "digital age" have generally accepted the need for accommodation. But are the meanings or images attached to libraries and their services the same or different? What are the degrees of agreement or difference? This is largely a function of the discourse surrounding libraries, librarians, and library stakeholders. All types of libraries, from those of conservation to those of public reading, have been obliged, willingly or unwillingly, to rethink their potential, to redefine their mission, their duties, and their services to the user, to define precisely their identity, and also to redefine their reciprocal relationships (Kay and Luyt, 2010; Odasso, 2007). An interesting emerging discourse on *librarianship* views it as a *calling*: in this view, librarians sense the deeper meaning and higher purpose in their work. It is possible to voice the significance of the library career and libraries as communities of purpose; librarianship serves a higher purpose that no amount of digitization or computerization can ever replace. Library professionals, students and educators of LIS, as well as trustees, hold a sacred profession, since it holds a profound meaning and purpose through the special service it renders. Indeed, libraries and librarians uplift society, promote community, transmit and preserve culture, and put order in the world (Maxwell, 2006).

Informational Justice (As Part of Social Justice)

Justice, as a *social virtue*, is an important component of moral judgments and plays a critical role in inclusive or global education. The core values of librarianship include social equity and justice, democracy, the public good, and diversity. One of the important drivers of educational innovation and social inclusion is the school library, as it has competency in the logical organization of information. The educational problem where formal education is invested in the globalized information society is not only that of guaranteeing access to information, but rather that of evaluating and comparing whether and how a school knows how to form students who know how to understand, reelaborate, digest, and use this information. How is this relevant to a school library? A school library that proposes as its main purpose to operate as an efficient means of access to information, no matter how valid and pertinent the information is, would risk doing something that is necessary but not adequate. Focusing only on providing access to information is certainly not adequate for a school that is today asked to move the barycenter from having information and knowledge to being competent and capable (Stumpf et al., 2016; Odasso, 2007; Burgess, 2013).

Libraries can serve as advocates for social justice, as well as promoters of human dignity and of sustainable development activities. In this view, public librarians are seen as having the responsibility to treat information services for social welfare as a fundamental aspect of their current services. In particular, equity of access is part of this core principle of libraries' social justice and welfare provision (Abdullahi, 2015; Pereyaslavska and Abba, 2015). The features of such a social justice orientation are: an ethic of care, solidarity, and respect, as well as the elements of social justice, namely, distribution, participation, and recognition. Within this framework of social justice, one can situate the responsibilities of LIS within the concept of *informational justice*, defined as justice for persons and communities in their activities as seekers, sources, and subjects of information (Mathiesen, 2015). A discursive account of "information poverty" leads to the conclusion that the library profession has the moral obligation to help groups of varyingly constructed "information poor". There is an evident relationship between the perceived needs of the "information poor" and the potential of the library profession to alleviate such information deficiency. Hence, this leads to the assertion that, in general, librarianship has a sense of ethical concern and righteousness and, therefore, imposes upon itself a certain social responsibility (Haider and Bawden, 2007).

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Assistive Technologies and Inclusive Education

Assistive technologies (AT) have a significant place in providing equal opportunities for persons with disability in all facets of life, because AT can compensate for their various limitations and contribute to lowering the barriers in all types of settings. A lot of the information is found in, or with the help of, web-based indices and databases in today's technology-rich education environment. For instance, the shifting of library databases and indices to networks online has created hitherto unavailable opportunities for persons with all sorts of disabilities. The extent to which these new opportunities become realized, however, depends largely on the design of the web environment (Koulikourdi, 2008; Stewart et al., 2005).

For the Project ENABLE (Expanding Non-discriminatory Access By Librarians Everywhere) at the Syracuse University, it was of utmost importance that participants understood how to effectively use the information they learned during the training workshops. The Project ENABLE workshops required participant teams to develop, based on what they were learning in the workshops, an action plan and at least one inclusive lesson plan to implement in their schools during the following school year. The strategies implemented were organized in five categories: overall school environment, learning materials, training and collaboration, advocacy, and evaluation. One of the most critical areas for librarians to address is the provision of differentiated instruction that meets the learning needs of all students: they devised at least five strategies that made their lesson plans more inclusive. Those lesson plans reflect a range of grade levels and subject areas (Small et al., 2014).

Some success stories have been described, for example: (1) an initiative involving inclusive libraries, which has enhanced the access to information and communication technology by persons with developmental disabilities; (2) a program for educating adults with developmental disabilities to participate in online activities; (3) program efforts in staff training in order to facilitate augmentative/alternative communication with adults who have developmental disabilities; (4) On the topic of autism: the effectiveness of a training program for discrete-trials teaching with confederates simulating children with autism, and a critique of early intervention methodologies for children with autism; and (5) the highly successful *On Campus Inclusive Education Program* at the University of Alberta (Goldberg and Wilgosh, 2007). It is believed that an "inclusive global education" can be attained. This will firstly involve a discourse that permits people with equally convincing but different opinions to learn to discuss and study issues of *social justice*. Thereafter, inclusive global educators can hopefully agree on ways in which to address global or local social justice issues. For such "inclusive global education" to happen, educational strategies that *include* a diverse set of clientele as well as students are necessary: the hope is that these will help the service providers stay focused on their *social justice responsibility*. Likewise, a global manner of thinking as well as determination to act on these convictions will be a necessity. Only then can librarianship form a cohort that is able to honor the diverse physical, mental, linguistic, cognitive and cultural complexities of library students, patrons and users (Landorf and Nevin, 2007).

CONCLUSION: A LIBRARY COMMITMENT TO THE POOR

The American Library Association (ALA) promotes equitable access to information for all individuals and groups, and recognizes the critical need to give due response to the demand for information of an ever-growing number of poor and destitute. The association's policy objectives include: Promoting the removal of all obstacles to library and information services, as well as promoting the production, publication, acquisition, and ready accessibility of print and nonprint materials to help in poverty alleviation and, thus, to attain a more *inclusive* librarianship. ALA's objectives likewise include encouraging the establishment of closer relationships with groups and institutions that address social issues like homelessness and hunger. Libraries across the globe can make an important contribution to solving or alleviating social problems, in a special way to helping ameliorate information poverty of the various classes of poor (Venturella, 1998; Gehner, 2005; Clark and MacCreaigh, 2006).

Practically all of us deal with poor people (of the various categories discussed in this paper) on a daily basis; in addition, the population of poor citizens and the homeless continues to grow in our current economy. Everyone has the chance to empower these individuals and create linkages: the library and librarians are no exception to this role of being an essential part of their lives. Many library scholars and leaders have written on the value of outreach to the disadvantaged and underserved, on the importance of social responsibilities, and on the way that services for the *excluded* can lift everybody upwards in the democratic process. It is hoped that all—librarians and library users alike—may take inspiration from this work so that they may do all they can to provide services to the poor. The whole library organization has to be committed to offering excellent service to the poor. There exist opportunities to develop partnerships with other community bodies and government agencies; indeed, some of the existing programmes show great creativity and potential (Gehner, 2005).

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